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Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, US, IS
SUBJ: BRITISH PRESS ON PERSHING MISSILE ISSUE

1. DISCLOSURE THAT THE USG IS STUDYING A REQUEST TO FURNISH PERSHING MISSILES TO ISRAEL HAS ATTRACTED CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION ON THE PART OF THE BRITISH PRESS. ON SEPTEMBER 22 THE TIMES AND THE FINANCIAL TIMES CARRIED THE STORY ON THE FRONT PAGE QUOTING A TV INTERVIEW BY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SCHLESINGER. HOWEVER, FINANCIAL TIMES WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT DICKS ADDED THAT "THE PERSHING HAS BECOME AN OBJECT OF INTENSE CONTROVERSY" AND THAT MANY STRATEGISTS HERE" HAD MADE THE POINT THAT THE PERSHING IS DESIGNED FOR US TACTICAL NUCLEAR FORCES. GUARDIAN ALSO FRONT-PAGED STORY SEPTEMBER 22, ITS WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT SIMON WINCHESTER ADDING "MR. SCHLESINGER'S MEN SAY THAT HE HAD KNOWN NOTHING OF THE DEAL AND THAT HE HAD CHIDED DR. KISSINGER FOR ARRANGING ARMS DEALS OVER WHICH HE HAD NO AUTHORITY. DR. KISSINGER SAID BY HIS AIDES TO BE BOILING AT THE ATTITUDE OF MR. SCHLESINGER...RETORTED YESTERDAY THAT THE REQUEST HAD COME IN LAST YEAR, THAT THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT KNEW ALL ABOUT IT, THAT THE PERSHING WAS NOT .A NEW ITEM', AND THAT MR. SCHLESINGER SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED BY ITS SUDDEN APPEARANCE IN THE NEWSPAPERS". WINCHESTER ARTICLE GOES ON TO SAY THAT WHAT PROMPTED THE
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CONTROVERSY IS "THE POSSIBILITY THAT AMERICAN ARMY UNITS MIGHT BE DEPRIVED OF A MAJOR TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPON

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BECAUSE OF A DEAL CONCOCTED BY THE HEAD OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT".

2. THE ISSUE HAS NOT BEEN FRONT-PAGED ON SEPTEMBER 23, BUT GUARDIAN HAS PUBLISHED AN EDITORIAL ON THE SUBJECT WHICH ASKS IF SECRETARY KISSINGER "HAS GONE TOO FAR IN PROMISING ISRAEL THE PERSHING". EDITORIAL NOTES THAT "ISRAEL WOULD REQUIRE A WEIGHTY SECURITY QUID PRO QUO FOR WITHDRAWAL", AND THAT SECDEF SAYS "ISRAEL COULD NOT RECEIVE WEAPON BEFORE THE END OF THE DECADE". HOWEVER, EDITORIAL CONTINUES "THE ISRAELIS, WE ARE TOLD, ARE ONLY A SCREWDRIVER AWAY FROM HAVING OPERATIONAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS...ISRAEL HAS RENEWED ITS PLEDGE NOT TO BE THE FIRST TO USE NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST...BUT THE PARADOX IS THAT THIS IS A NEW TWIST IN THE ARMS SPIRAL WHICH COULD MAKE THE AREA LESS RATHER THAN MORE SECURE...WERE ISRAEL TO BE HARD PRESSED, WOULD IT REALLY

FORSWEAR THE NUCLEAR OPTION...THE RISK IS NOT WORTH TAKING."

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